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TO AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL XANGHAI IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL SHENYANG IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE

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BEIJING PASS CHENGDU

E.O. 12356: NA  
TAGS: CASC, ASEC, CH  
SUBJECT: TFCM01: TRANSCRIPT OF AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS'  
JUNE 19 TESTIMONY

STATEMENT BY

AMBASSADOR RICHARD L. WILLIAMS  
ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
JUNE 19, 1989

CHAIRMAN DYNALLY AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS OUR EFFORTS TO ASSIST AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE WAKE OF RECENT DISTURBANCES IN CHINA. THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS NO HIGHER PRIORITY THAN HELPING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WHEN CRISIS STRIKES. DESPITE SOME CRITICISM, I BELIEVE OUR POSTS IN CHINA AND ON THE PERIPHERY, AS WELL AS THE DEPARTMENT, PERFORMED THIS TASK WELL IN EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES IN CHINA.

MORE THAN 6,000 AMERICANS LEFT CHINA SAFELY OVER THE PAST WEEK, ONE OF THE LARGEST EVACUATIONS OF AMERICANS IN A CRISIS SITUATION SINCE WORLD WAR II. NO AMERICANS DIED IN THE CRISIS IN CHINA, AND ONLY TWO US CITIZENS WERE INJURED DURING THE DISTURBANCES. BOTH OF THE INJURED AMERICANS ARE NOW AMBULATORY. WE ESTIMATE THERE ARE NOW APPROXIMATELY 1,000 AMERICANS REMAINING IN CHINA, INCLUDING 182 US GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEFLY DESCRIBE FOR YOU THE SITUATION WHICH DEVELOPED IN CHINA AND THE STEPS WE TOOK TO ASSIST AMERICANS IN THE CRISIS.

THE CRISIS IN CHINA BEGAN TWO MONTHS AGO WITH PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS IN BEIJING FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF FORMER PARTY LEADER HU YAOBANG ON APRIL 15. THE GOVERNMENT INITIALLY REACTED WITH RESTRAINT. THE DEMONSTRATIONS GREW IN SIZE AND IN POPULAR SUPPORT, THROUGH THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MAY 4 MOVEMENT, AND THEN DISRUPTED THE SCHEDULE FOR GENERAL SECRETARY GORBACHEV'S VISIT TO BEIJING MAY 15-18. THE REACTION CONTINUED TO BE RESTRAINED ALTHOUGH THE AUTHORITIES WERE CLEARLY displeased with the changes forced in the GORBACHEV SUMMIT SCHEDULE.

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN THESE DEMONSTRATIONS BUT THE CROWDS WERE QUITE PEACEFUL. THERE WERE VERY FEW REPORTS OF INJURIES, AND THERE WAS NO APPARENT THREAT TO FOREIGNERS IN BEIJING.

HOWEVER, WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE BUILDUP OF TENSIONS IN BEIJING DURING THE GORBACHEV VISIT, AND WE ISSUED A TRAVEL ADVISORY ON MAY 18, URGING US CITIZENS TO USE CAUTION WHILE IN CHINA AND AVOID AREAS WHERE DEMONSTRATIONS MIGHT OCCUR.

ON MAY 19, PREMIER LI PENG DECLARED MARTIAL LAW IN BEIJING, AND TROOPS BEGAN TO CONVERGE ON THE CITY. WITHIN HOURS, WE FORMED AN INFORMAL WORKING GROUP IN THE DEPARTMENT TO MONITOR EVENTS IN CHINA ON A 24-HOUR BASIS. WE KEPT IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH EMBASSY BEIJING. OUR TRAVEL ADVISORY WAS STRENGTHENED, ADVISING AMERICANS TO DEFER ALL TRAVEL TO CHINA FOR 72 HOURS (SUBSEQUENTLY EXTENDED INDEFINITELY). DESPITE THE INCREASING CONCENTRATION OF TROOPS IN BEIJING, AUTHORITIES CONTINUED TO ACT WITH RESTRAINT, AS WHEN THE TROOPS WERE HALTED BY LARGE CONCENTRATIONS OF CIVILIANS AS THEY ATTEMPTED TO MARCH TO THE SQUARE.

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 3 (EARLY SUNDAY MORNING IN BEIJING), ELEMENTS OF THE CHINESE ARMY LAUNCHED A BRUTAL ATTACK ON THE DEMONSTRATORS AT TIANANMEN SQUARE. THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUP WAS IMMEDIATELY UPGRADED TO A FULL-SCALE CHINA TASK FORCE, ALSO STAFFED ROUND THE CLOCK, WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL OF THE RELEVANT BUREAUS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT. THE EMBASSY IN BEIJING AND OUR FOUR OTHER POSTS IN CHINA ALSO WENT TO A ROUND-THE-CLOCK FOOTING.

EMBASSY OFFICERS, AT GREAT PERSONAL RISK, HELPED CLEAR AMERICAN CITIZENS OUT OF TIANANMEN SQUARE AS THE TROOPS BEGAN TO MOVE IN. ON SUNDAY, JUNE 4, THE EMBASSY SENT OFFICERS TO ALL HOSPITALS NEAR THE FIGHTING TO SEE IF THERE WERE INJURED AMERICANS. ONLY ONE WAS FOUND; THE EMBASSY DOCTOR VISITED HIM AND HE WAS LATER BROUGHT TO A SAFE LOCATION. THE EMBASSY ALSO WORKED TO WIN THE RELEASE OF CBS CORRESPONDENT RICHARD ROTH, WHO HAD BEEN DETAINED BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES DURING THE EVENTS IN THE SQUARE.

THE SITUATION BECAME INCREASINGLY UNCERTAIN IN BEIJING. THE EMBASSY WAS INSTRUCTED TO AUTHORIZE DEPARTURE OF DEPENDENTS ON TUESDAY, JUNE 6, AND THE EMBASSY URGED ALL AMERICANS IN BEIJING TO LEAVE AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. THE MILITARY SITUATION APPEARED TO DETERIORATE DRAMATICALLY IN BEIJING AND ELSEWHERE OVER THE NEXT FEW HOURS; TROOPS EVEN FIRED RANDOMLY INTO THE DIPLOMATIC HOUSING AREAS. ON JUNE 7 US GOVERNMENT DEPENDENTS FROM BEIJING AND ALL CONSULATES IN CHINA WERE ORDERED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, AND THE EMBASSY ADVISED ALL AMERICANS ANYWHERE IN CHINA TO LEAVE.

WE BELIEVE THE TRAVEL ADVISORIES WERE SUCCESSFUL IN

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DISCOURAGING MANY AMERICANS FROM GOING TO CHINA AND POTENTIALLY PUTTING THEMSELVES IN HARM'S WAY. WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR AN EVACUATION MIGHT BE NECESSARY AS THE SITUATION IN BEIJING DETERIORATED, THE EMBASSY STAFF ATTEMPTED TO TELEPHONE EVERY AMERICAN LISTED IN ITS FILES, SOME 1,200 PERSONS. AS YOU WOULD EXPECT, THE EMBASSY HAD TO MAKE SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO REACH MANY OF THE AMERICANS BECAUSE IT WAS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO GET THROUGH TO THEM. OUR POSTS IN CHENGDU, GUANGZHOU, SHENYANG, AND SHANGHAI MADE SIMILAR EFFORTS TO CONTACT OTHER AMERICANS IN CHINA PRIOR TO THE TIANNANMEN ATTACK.

ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 5, THE EMBASSY TOOK ACTION TO MOVE PEOPLE FROM THE UNIVERSITY AREA TO HOTELS IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE CITY. AFTER EMBASSY REQUESTS TO RENT BUSES WERE TURNED DOWN BY 24 LOCAL FIRMS, THE EMBASSY ORGANIZED CONVOYS USING EVERY AVAILABLE EMBASSY VEHICLE TO TRANSPORT STUDENTS FROM THEIR UNIVERSITIES TO HOTELS, AND LATER TO THE AIRPORT.

OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, EMBASSY OFFICERS DROVE CARS AND VANS TO ALL UNIVERSITIES IN BEIJING -- TO SOME AS MANY AS 8 TIMES -- GOING AROUND BARRICADES, PAST TROOPS AND AROUND TANKS, AND SOMETIMES CONFRONTING ROADBLOCKS MARSHED BY ANGRY, NERVOUS, AND CONFUSED YOUNG SOLDIERS POINTING LOADED AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. OUR PERSONNEL DID THIS THEMSELVES BECAUSE THE CHINESE DRIVERS DID NOT COME TO WORK. EMBASSY PERSONNEL ALSO ASSISTED IN THE TRANSPORTATION OF OVER TWO HUNDRED AMERICANS TO THE BEIJING AIRPORT. IN ORDER TO EVACUATE AMERICANS STRANDED IN TIANJIN, THE EMBASSY ORGANIZED A CONVOY OF BUSES TO GO THERE TO PICK THEM UP. IN ADDITION TO SAFETY CONCERN AND THE UNAVAILABILITY OF OUR USUAL STAFF DRIVERS, EMBASSY PERSONNEL ALSO HAD TO COPE WITH DEPLETED SUPPLIES OF GASOLINE AFTER GAS STATIONS WERE CLOSED FOR SEVERAL DAYS ON JUNE 7.

SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC OUT OF CHINA WAS STRAINED BY THE EXODUS OF THE FOREIGNERS. IN ORDER TO SUPPLEMENT COMMERCIAL SERVICE AND ENSURE THAT ALL AMERICANS WHO WISHED TO LEAVE COULD GET OUT IN A TIMELY FASHION, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE CHARTERED AIRCRAFT FOR SPECIAL FLIGHTS TO BEIJING, SHANGHAI, AND WUHAN; OUR EMBASSY ALSO WORKED WITH THE CANADIAN EMBASSY TO CHARTER A FLIGHT TO DALIAN. CONSULAR OFFICERS FROM THE DESTINATION POSTS ACCOMPANIED THESE FLIGHTS TO ASSIST, AND THE EMBASSY IN TOKYO AND CONSULATE GENERAL IN HONG KONG PROVIDED EXTENSIVE SUPPORT TO AMERICANS ARRIVING ON THESE FLIGHTS.

FOR EXAMPLE, EMBASSY TOKYO HAD THIRTY MEMBERS OF ITS STAFF AT MARITA AIRPORT TO ASSIST EVACUEES, INCLUDING A DOCTOR, A PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT, AND A NURSE TO PROVIDE ALL ASSISTANCE NECESSARY. THE US MILITARY COMMAND PROVIDED A FIVE-HAN MEDICAL TEAM AND PLACED THE US MILITARY HOSPITAL ON STAND-BY. THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN HONG KONG ALSO MOBILIZED ITS PEOPLE TO ASSIST THE LARGE NUMBER OF AMERICANS EXITING SOUTH CHINA.

IN BEIJING, EMBASSY DEPENDENT SPOUSES WORKED ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS ASSURING PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS

UNTIL THEY THEMSELVES WERE EVACUATED AFTER THE APARTMENTS OF SEVERAL AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE SPRAYED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OFFICERS ASSISTED AMERICANS WITH LOANS WHEN NECESSARY FOR ONGOING TRAVEL. ALL AVAILABLE OFFICERS, INCLUDING THE EMBASSY'S DEFENSE ATTACHES WORKED HARD TO GET CRITICAL INFORMATION TO KEEP WASHINGTON INFORMED AND

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PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR THE EVACUATION.

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DURING THIS PROCESS, THE VOICE OF AMERICA MADE FREQUENT BROADCASTS THAT PROVIDED INFORMATION ABOUT CHARTER FLIGHTS, TRAVEL ADVISORIES, AND OTHER RELEVANT CONDITIONS.

IN WASHINGTON, WE HAD AT VARIOUS TIMES OVER ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE STAFFING THE CONSULAR AND EVACUATION TASK FORCE EACH DAY TO ASSIST WITH INQUIRIES. DURING THE PEAK DAY OF JUNE 6, SOME 6,000 CALLS WERE RECEIVED. THE TASK FORCE PREPARED AND SENT TO CHINA INQUIRIES FOR SOME 1,400 AMERICANS WHOSE RELATIVES WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR WHEREABOUTS. THE POSTS THEMSELVES REPORTED BACK TO US CONCERNING SOME 3200 AMERICANS.

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON ONE OTHER PRINCIPLE THAT UNDERLAY OUR THINKING ON THE EVACUATION. WE FELT THAT ALL AMERICANS WERE IN SERIOUS DANGER AND WE WANTED TO BE CERTAIN THAT OFFICIAL DEPENDENTS AND OTHER AMERICAN CITIZENS WERE TREATED ON AN EQUAL BASIS. WE MADE SURE THERE WAS ADEQUATE SPACE FOR ALL AMERICANS WHO WISHED TO LEAVE. OUR ENTIRE STAFF REMAINED ON THE GROUND IN BEIJING AND IN OTHER POSTS IN CHINA DESPITE THE VERY REAL DANGERS, DURING THE EVACUATION PROCESS AND BEYOND. AND AS NOTED, WE MADE GREAT EFFORTS TO CONTACT ALL AMERICANS IN CHINA TO HELP THOSE WHO WISHED TO LEAVE DO-SO.

WE KNOW THAT SOME AMERICANS WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH OUR EFFORTS TO ASSIST. WE ARE GENUINELY SORRY THAT SOME FELT MORE SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT THIS ENORMOUS EVACUATION IN A SITUATION WHERE THERE COULD HAVE BEEN MANY AMERICAN CASUALTIES WAS A MAJOR SUCCESS. THOSE PEOPLE WHO WORKED ROUND THE CLOCK AT OUR MISSIONS IN CHINA, IN TOKYO AND HONG KONG, AND IN THE DEPARTMENT CAN TAKE GREAT SATISFACTION IN WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED.

I MUST ADD A PERSONAL WORD OF PRAISE FOR AMBASSADOR LILLEY. HE WAS TIREDLESS AND EFFECTIVE IN HIS EFFORTS THROUGH THIS CRISIS, AND I KNOW HE INSPIRED ALL WHO WERE

THERE WORKING WITH HIM. IN MANY TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS DURING THOSE DAYS OF SUCH TURBULENCE AND STRESS, I CAN TELL YOU THAT I HEARD HIS VOICE -- AND THE VOICES OF MANY OTHERS AT THE EMBASSY AND CONSULATES -- CRACKING WITH EMOTION AND FATIGUE. MAYBE IT WASN'T PERFECT, BUT THEY GAVE IT THEIR DAMNEDEST. AND SO DID A LOT OF PEOPLE BACK HERE AT HOME. BAKER

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